Engraving by Venturini (1685): the staircase known as « Bollori ».

for him and his friends. On the other hand, in the Paris Manuscript examined by Coffin, it was specifically stated that the platform was supposed to be used as an open-air dining loggia. The ramps at the end of the Path of the Hundred Fountains led to the upper level just below the terrace of the villa. This transversal axis which runs the whole breadth of the garden was called the Cardinal's Path because the Cardinal and his friends used to converse as they walked up and down it

To the northeast was the grotto of Esculapius (*) and Hygeia, the statues of the two deities are now respectively in the Louvre and the Vatican. In the center is the delightful loggia completed c 1570 which, in addition to providing access to the stairs leading to the terrace, also encompasses three niches containing antique statues: a Pandora (†), a Minerva (now in the Capitoline Museum), and a third whose identity is unknown.

At the end of the « Cardinal's Path » is the Grotto of Diana, perhaps the most elaborately decorated of the grottos: the flooring is paved in majolica with designs of fleur-de-lis, golden apples, and the eagles from the coat-of-arms of the d'Este family, at the corners were stucco reliefs with female figures holding baskets full of golden apples, and the floor

(*) This grotto at Villa d'Este was most likely dedicated to Esculapius for his connection to the myth of Hippolytus (It was Esculapius who brought Hippolytus back to life)

(†) Pandora (in Greek = all the gifts) was the first woman and received gifts from all the gods. Jupiter, angry with Prometheus who had stolen fire from the heavens to give it to mankind, gave her a box to present to Prometheus but he, fearing a trick, refused to accept it. Prometheus' brother, Epimetheus, fell in love with Pandora and wed her. One day, curious to see what was inside the box, she opened it and all the various kinds of evil escaped and fell upon the earth. Remaining on the bottom of the box, there was only hope. Parallels have often been drawn between Pandora and Eve